United Nations A/69/PV.13

General Assembly
Sixty-ninth session

Official Records

13th plenary meeting
Friday, 26 September 2014, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kutesa ..... (Uganda)

In the absence of the President, Mrs. Baaro (Kiribati), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Address by Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, President of the Federal Republic of Somalia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Federal Republic of Somalia.

Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, President of the Federal Republic of Somalia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, President of the Federal Republic of Somalia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mohamud: It is a pleasure to join the Assembly today. Yesterday a journalist asked me to describe Somalia in 15 seconds. First, let me say that Somalis are great storytellers, so asking a Somali to say anything in 15 seconds is very difficult. I really had to think about where to begin. I told him that if he could think of a problem, then Somalia has it, and often at the same time as other problems — war, piracy, extremist terrorist groups, famine, droughts, floods. But that was the Somalia of yesterday, not the Somalia of today. I fear that many people's experience of Somalia is confined to films — such as the recent *Captain Phillips* and re-runs of *Black Hawk Down* — or YouTube scenes of the horrific Westgate Mall incident in Kenya, or an ever-growing number of titles on library bookshelves that include the words "failed State", or references to a long war. But if we shrink our perspective to just that glimpse, we miss the beauty of the very different picture that we are painting right now in Somalia. The Somalia I lead as President is a very different country. My Somalia is not a 15-second summary of problems. It is not a Somalia of failure.

We may still be fragile, but we are no longer a broken State. September of 2012 marked a milestone for Somalia with the establishment of a new Federal Government built on national consensus and universally recognized by the international community. At its start, the Federal Government of Somalia faced multiple complex challenges, a stark lack of resources and only very basic institutional and Government structures. The country was divided, with no clear path to unification. Al-Shabaab and other militia groups controlled most of our territory. The task ahead of us was daunting and the expectations from both our people and our international partners were very high. Everything was a priority, from security to political inclusivity, and from health care and education to private-sector development and basic economic reform.

We faced the significant challenge of having to build frameworks and institutions while simultaneously delivering immediate, tangible benefits for our people, in the form of schools, hospitals, roads and more. We had to deliver on that long list of interrelated priorities while simultaneously dealing with a politically fragmented environment and fighting a war against terrorist

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groups. And we have succeeded. The foundation for the future has been laid through our clear military defeat of Al-Shabaab, which has been made possible only through the joint efforts of the Somali National Army and the African Union Mission to Somalia. More than 70 per cent of Somalia's southern and central regions has now been liberated from the scourge of Al-Shabaab and restored to the control of the Federal Government of Somalia.

Over the past two years we have focused on building foundations and laying the groundwork for reform. We have developed legal frameworks, governance structures and public financial management reform processes. We have formalized Somalia's presence in the international community, strengthened our relationships with neighbouring countries, restructured key institutions, established forums for dialogue, developed a path for political reform and put in place the architecture for linking international support to our priorities through the New Deal Somali Compact.

We have made major progress in reforming public financial management, putting in place better accountability measures, controls and governance structures. Key legislation has been drafted, budget policy developed and the capacity of the offices of the Accountant General and Auditor General strengthened. An annual budget, developed with the implementation of Government-wide work plans and priorities in mind, has been delivered. A new governor and board of directors have been appointed for the Central Bank of Somalia, which we launched from scratch. A financial governance committee, constituting an advisory body held jointly by the Federal Government and international financial institutions, has been established to provide greater transparency and oversight of financial transactions in Somalia.

We can take heart in the fact that distinct progress has been made in moving the country from failed-State status to that of a nascent nation with functioning institutions. Today, in September 2014, I am confidently able to say that, with the support of the Somali people and the engagement of the international community, Somalia has undergone a remarkable transformation. Today we have a country that is beginning to unite as a nation, behind a vision that in 2016 will see a federal and united Somalia, a Somalia that will meet our aspirations for a better future.

But we cannot rest there. Somalia has always had an enormous capacity for playing a long game, and now more than ever we must stay our course. Somalia is at a critical juncture in its efforts to achieve security and stability. This past year has seen a rise in terrorist groups and activities around the world. Today, the reach of terrorists is not confined to one country; it is a global issue that requires global action. More than any other fragile State today, Somalia has significantly advanced in its fight against terrorism. We are winning the war, but we must also win the peace. President Obama spoke earlier this week of being at a crossroads of war and peace (see A/69/PV.5). As Somalis, we know better than any other nation the truth of that statement. We are at that juncture.

That is why we know that solutions cannot be only military in nature. Yesterday we were reminded of the origins behind the establishment of the United Nations. We were reminded of the power of peaceful political reconciliation. Military intervention can end war, but it cannot propagate peace. Dialogue, reconciliation, forgiveness — those are the tools of peacebuilders, the tools of nation-builders.

As President of Somalia, I reaffirm our commitment to denying extremist ideology and its servants any hiding place in Somalia. Somalia's strategic location makes it a gateway between the Arabian peninsula and the African continent. We cannot defeat Al-Shabaab only to allow other extremists, such as the militant group known as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, to find fertile ground. Although the security situation in Somalia is improving and Al-Shabaab is becoming a spent force, we cannot afford to rest until we achieve a final victory. We must strengthen Somalia and make it into a firewall, both for security purposes and ideologically. Somalia must be strengthened in order to prevent the African continent from being once again invaded by violent extremists who target innocent civilians, spreading their ideology of death. Solutions must be sought by applying the rule of law, pursuing human rights and affording access to justice. People must be allowed to determine their own future and to find their own place in that brilliant future.

We must not forget the importance of political reconciliation and reform in maintaining long-term stability and creating an enabling environment for development gains. Two years ago, it quickly became clear that the formation of a unified and federal Somalia was the key to delivering peace and building sustainable security. The Vision 2016 framework was developed to encapsulate that important national goal. Vision

2016 outlines the framework for federalism through reconciliation, the adoption of a revised permanent constitution through a referendum and the path to democratic elections. It is a tall order that cannot be overstated.

The Federal Government has undertaken to revise our Provisional Constitution by 2016 and adopt it by means of a public referendum. We have undertaken to deliver a federal Somalia made up of member states. We have undertaken to deliver credible, national elections. We have not failed on the side of ambition, and we must not fail to deliver on our ambition. And we are delivering. Led by the Federal Government, together with existing and emerging regional stakeholders inside Somalia, we have made significant progress in the formation of interim regional administrations in the south-west and central regions of Somalia through dialogue and consultations.

The Constitution Review and Implementation Commission was set up in May 2014 and started work on reviewing the current Provisional Constitution of Somalia. The approval and adoption of the Provisional Constitution is critical to an inclusive political settlement that paves the way for sustainable security and development in Somalia.

In order to create a federal State, it will be essential to ensure the full participation of subfederal administrations in the political transformation of Somalia. The Boundaries and Federation Commission will be established and will devise the mechanisms for supporting the process of federating Somalia. The National Independent Electoral Commission will be endorsed by Parliament by the end of 2014. The Federal Government is committed to inclusivity and, while observing the principles of Somali-Somali dialogue, is taking concrete steps to engage all Somalis, including women and minority groups, in the political process of nation-building. We have seen great progress in connecting the Government to the Somali public, thanks to the improvement of service delivery, particularly in the area of education. In two years we have enrolled close to 100,000 students in public schools and appointed 2,000 teachers.

We are investing in the strengthening of our Somali national forces. The Somali National Army is a key element in defeating Al-Shabaab, and we are working with our international partners to ensure that we have a well-trained, well-equipped, integrated national army and other defence institutions in place, so that Somalia will one day be well able to defend its own peace and participate in international peace.

However, it grieves me to report today that the humanitarian situation in Somalia is extremely critical. About 3.2 million Somalis need life-saving or livelihood assistance right now. A terrible mix of drought, rising food prices, increasing malnutrition and insecurity is plunging Somalia into a humanitarian crisis not dissimilar to the horrific famine of 2011. Out of a population of 12.3 million in Somalia, more than 1 million people face acute food insecurity today and an equal number of people are internally displaced. Three months ago the humanitarian community and the Federal Government sounded the alarm about the impending crisis. Humanitarian response plans were prepared and launched. Swift action by the Federal Government to set up an interim interministerial committee and interventions with humanitarian partners and donors has mitigated the current crisis. However, a sustained and scaled-up response is required now to prevent a free fall. The humanitarian appeal for Somalia remains severely underfunded. Only 32 per cent of the requested $933 million has been received. This situation must be addressed urgently. As we enter the last third of the year, more than half a billion dollars is still required for life-saving activities. Over the past 18 months, Somalia has seen a significant amount of progress in its political, economic and development sectors. If the current humanitarian situation deteriorates into a crisis, all those gains will be undermined. We have come too far to allow that to happen.

It is clear that, despite challenges, Somalia is moving forward on the path of integration, inclusivity and peace. We are leaving behind the disorder and discord spread by a distorted ideology. I was told a remarkable story recently, a true story that I think illustrates perfectly the power of reconciliation and the triumph of compassion over brutality. One of our Somali non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is running a social reconciliation programme in some remote areas of Somalia. It consists of 12 weeks of intense facilitated discussions about truth, designed to disrupt the cycle of violence and create a safe space where people can tell their stories and, through that exercise, nurture understanding. A young man whose family had moved to another country when his father was murdered by another man from his village heard of the programme. He heard that the Somali NGO was training programme

facilitators, people who would be able to move freely from one village to another and teach others the way of peace and reconciliation. Rather than as an opportunity to pursue peace, this young man, filled with anger at his father's murder, saw it as the ideal way for him to exact revenge. He would return to Somalia, undertake the training course, gain access to his family's old village under a false pretext, and while there he would kill his father's murderer.

He therefore came home to Somalia, bought a weapon, underwent the training and went to the village. He made sure that his father's murderer attended the training, while harbouring the destruction of his father's enemy in his heart. But then, something started to happen. As he helped the villagers tell their stories of violence, of the endless cycle of horror, of the terrible choices they had had to make, his heart softened. He understood that any choice that involved violence was a not a choice at all. One day he stood up at the training centre, addressed his father's murderer, explained that he had plotted to kill him and begged his forgiveness.

In a way, this one man's story echoes the national history that we are beginning to tell in Somalia today, namely, that our future will not be built on the ashes of revenge. It will not be built on the stones of violence. We reaffirm our choice of peace. We reaffirm that reconciliation, the path that we have chosen, will be won through dialogue, through inclusive politics, through creating a shared vision of what Somalia can be in the future. Our success requires the support of our international partners, but most of all it demands the ownership and the commitment of the Somali people, which we are assuring. As we continue towards democratization, now is not the time for scepticism. We have laid out our plans, and we need to stand together to execute and deliver.

Mr. Antoine (Grenada), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Our achievements and progress have been made possible by the determination of the Somali people. We welcome and acknowledge the strong support of our international partners and look forward to their continuing engagement behind our nationally led agenda. I acknowledge the commitment and the sacrifice of our Somali defence institutions and grieve the loss of our soldiers and security staff who died in pursuit of peace. I renew my commitment to serve the Somali people. Somalia is indebted to their resilience and perseverance in the face of extraordinary challenges. Somalis look forward to walking, together with the nations assembled here, towards a peaceful, prosperous future for the nation call Somalia. We are very much indebted to the family of the United Nations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Federal Republic of Somalia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, President of the Federal Republic of Somalia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Serbia.

Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Nikolić (*spoke in Serbian; English text provided by the delegation*): I congratulate Mr. Sam Kutesa on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. I am convinced that his international prestige and experience will make an important contribution to the crafting of sustainable political solutions to the new global challenges that lie ahead of us. I would also like to convey Serbia's readiness to address and provide unequivocal support to the resolution of priorities relative to climate change, an integrated global economy, international security issues and all other topics included in the agenda that we will actively pursue.

I should like to express my special thanks to outgoing President, Mr. John Ashe, for his efforts and successful work during the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, which laid down the foundations for the post-2015 sustainable development agenda, as well as for his endeavours to strengthen the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

The sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly is being held at a time when we mark an important anniversary, 100 years having elapsed since the

outbreak of the Great War, a war which shaped the twentieth century. The anniversary was commemorated at different places, but, regrettably, no common ceremony at the highest level was organized in the spirit of reconciliation and forgiveness.

Serbia strongly supports the General Assembly agenda for the sixty-ninth session and sees itself as an active partner and participant in the implementation of United Nations development goals. The world is faced with new security, climate and socioeconomic challenges. We need to do much work together to ensure humankind's progress in the twenty-first century. Serbia offers its experiences and ideas for global management, so that we can ensure a better future for new generations all over the world.

Allow me to consider three of today's most pressing global challenges that concern not just Serbia but all of us — climate change, global security and deadly infectious diseases of vast proportions. I believe that, if not addressed wisely and systematically, those challenges could put the survival of future generations in jeopardy.

Socioeconomic interrelatedness accounts for the disappearance of the old division into "us" and "them". All of us, all States Members of the United Nations, share the same destiny and shoulder equal responsibility for the problems that directly face humankind. One of the urgent global challenges that we are confronting is climate change. At the Climate Summit 2014, in which I participated with great interest, we discussed the historic chance that we shall have at the upcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris in 2015. Consensus among scientists indicates that the global temperatures in the twenty-first century will rise dramatically. Extreme weather conditions will increase, with a frequency that depends on the intensity of global warming. Inexorably, the effects of natural disasters aggravate the fragile economic situation in Serbia and the region of South-East Europe and make the struggle against poverty ever more difficult. That struggle remains the quintessential challenge facing the world today.

Activities aimed at alleviating the consequences of climate change are the imperative of our age. In determining binding measures, surely we should take account of the development needs of poor and underdeveloped countries. I am convinced that the Assembly shares my opinion that there is a need to act, as soon as possible, to improve adaptation systems and to establish mechanisms for lowering the risks posed by natural disasters. I therefore view this year as an opportunity to kick off intensive activities in devising climate policy and encouraging countries to commit to reducing carbon emissions. We have a historic chance to devise an energy policy that is sustainable and provides for substantive global action on climate change policy. I am convinced that we all share the view that it is urgent and obligatory to improve the adaptation system and set up mechanisms for reducing the enormous risks of natural disasters. Serbia wishes to contribute to reaching a legally binding, general consent on climate for all the peoples of the world. I believe that the Green Climate Fund should play an important role in the process of implementing the agreed principles. By 2020, it should achieve its ambitious goal and fulfil the commitments we have made for the sake of humankind.

This year, I witnessed, and my country was a victim of, extreme weather conditions in Europe. Unfortunately, Serbia and its neighbours in the region were subjected to natural disasters as a consequence of climate change. Serbia was and is vulnerable these days, all over again, to floods of biblical proportions. I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the United Nations for its extensive and efficient engagement and cooperation with the Government of Serbia in the aftermath of the floods. In particular, I would like to thank French President François Hollande for heeding my call to convene a donors conference to help Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. I would also like to thank the European Commission, the members of the European Union, the Russian Federation, China, Japan, Belarus, African countries and the countries of the region for their assistance and engagement. Without their generous bilateral assistance, we would not have been able to help everyone in dire need. Short of the selfless assistance of Member States, we would not have been able to help the affected people, many of whom lost everything they had acquired during their lifetime.

The national priority of Serbia is to achieve a sustainable political solution on the question of Kosovo and Metohija. For Serbia, the only acceptable, fair and just solution is to reject secessionism and preserve the territorial integrity of every country, including Serbia. Serbia therefore is clearly committed to the quest for a sustainable political solution through dialogue with representatives of the Provisional Institutions of Self-

Government in Pristina. The political solution that Serbia advocates comprehends the interests of the Serbian, Albanian and other populations. It will be a durable political solution that is satisfactory to all parties, and we can reach it only through constructive dialogue.

The normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina is contributing to the process of European integration. We expect the European Union to continue to encourage, through its active engagement, an open dialogue and compliance with agreed-on obligations in order to strengthen mutual trust. Serbia has complied, responsibly and on time, with all the obligations it has undertaken to date regarding the implementation of the Brussels Agreement. I would like to point out that Serbia is open to continuing constructive dialogue with Pristina at every level.

In accordance with Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) is the guarantor and the basis for action by all other international missions in Kosovo and Metohija. For Serbia, a reduction in UNMIK's mandate and competencies in Kosovo and Metohija is unacceptable. In its negotiations with the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Pristina, Serbia proceeds from the premise that all solutions must be in accordance with the Constitution of Serbia and resolution 1244 (1999). That concerns questions having to do with the province's status, the position of Serbs and other non-Albanians in the province, and protection of the Serbian religious and cultural heritage.

Our approach to the search for a sustainable political solution for Kosovo and Metohija has broader political implications. I believe we can all agree that the creation of conditions for the enjoyment of basic human rights and minority rights would not only promote the return of the displaced population but would also provide a model for political dialogue and toleration, the assumptions of today's world and the policies of peace that the United Nations spearheads.

Creating optimal conditions for internally displaced persons to return to their homes is the key factor in the process of normalizing relations between Belgrade and Pristina. I would like to recall that everything began with the acts of terror committed by the Albanian minority in Kosovo and Metohija aimed at achieving their secessionist ambitions. Today, 15 years after the adoption of resolution 1244 (1999) — by which we ceded administration of the province of Kosovo and Metohija to the United Nations — the conditions conducive to returning internally displaced persons to Kosovo and Metohija have still not been created, something that is noted in the Secretary-General's regular reports on UNMIK's work and in the reports of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons.

Serbia has the largest number of internally displaced persons of any country in Europe, a total of 230,000. They must not remain mere statistics. They must not be forgotten. There are 58,000 refugees living in Serbia, 42,000 from Croatia and 16,000 from Bosnia and Herzegovina. I believe refugees deserve special attention from the United Nations and UNHCR. The marginalization of the serious problems that those vulnerable people face should be condemned rather than ignored. The issue of basic human rights is a universal one, respected by every State Member of the United Nations. Any hasty decision on the issue would be a mistake, since it could undermine the region's reconciliation processes, which are not yet fully formed, as well as the fundamental right of Serbs to return to their homes in Kosovo, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Serbia has taken a step forward into the future, and wishes to make an active contribution to global economic progress, the suppression of crime and corruption, and the quest for a solution to all matters of international security. Membership in the European Union is our foreign policy priority. Like any other form of international association, the European Union falls short of achieving ideal solutions and is saddled with its own challenges and issues relating to its enlargement, but it is still the best community of European States. Serbia's place is with its members so that it can fully modernize its society and State and further develop its economic capacities. The clear goal we aspire to is to build Serbia into a respected member of the family of European nations, and our progress in membership negotiations will contribute to that.

Serbia is preparing to assume the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) next year. That role and task present my country with complex, multilateral challenges, but we are ready for them, and we have been preparing in collaboration with Switzerland in positive and constructive cooperation. Serbia will use the OSCE chairmanship to encourage and strengthen mutual

cooperation among the countries in the region. The Balkan countries have made immense progress in recent years and have developed substantial and comprehensive mutual cooperation. Serbia will make every effort to see that the process of reconciliation and cooperation and mutual respect is fully implemented throughout the region. The chairmanship will also be used to encourage those processes.

We are deeply disturbed and alarmed by the events in Ukraine and will do everything in our power to help find a peaceful solution to the problem and overcome differences peacefully. Our Slav brothers deserve peace and tranquil development, along with respect for those universal principles that should be accorded all countries and peoples and that are clearly defined in the Charter of the United Nations. Serbia respects the territorial integrity of Ukraine as a United Nations Member, and the equitable implementation of international law. I recall that some countries denied Serbia that right through their recognition and promotion of the independence of a part of the territory of Serbia — Kosovo and Metohija.

The principles of safeguarding peace and security, the peaceful settlement of disputes and crises and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member States are the bases on which the Republic of Serbia will cooperate in the search for solutions to the various political and security challenges in the world. At the global level, therefore, we support all efforts by the United Nations and its Member States and by regional organizations to find diplomatic solutions to the world's most sensitive security issues. With its broad political experience and bold leadership, Serbia can contribute, through dialogue with friends, partners and Member States, to devising solutions to the disagreements that threaten to disunite the world all over again.

Serbia is making a concrete contribution to maintaining international peace by participating in United Nations and European Union peacekeeping operations. Thanks to that work and to our cooperation with allies and partners, the region is more stable than it was 15 years ago. I would point out that we support every initiative aimed at modifying and adapting peace operations to new security challenges. Serbia calls for strengthening regional cooperation and harmonizing approaches to the activities of peacekeeping missions.

Serbia's new policy has fostered sincere and fully transparent relations in South-Eastern Europe. That was particularly evident during the disastrous floods that struck Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The solidarity and magnanimity shown then set an example for the entire world. Today our region is teeming with investment opportunities, and a strong and peaceful South-Eastern Europe is synonymous with a strong and stable Europe as a whole.

Serbia has experienced acts of terrorism on its territory in Kosovo and Metohija. We therefore understand very well the security problems the world is facing. We firmly condemn every form of terrorism. We are ready to discuss any initiative that can contribute to strengthening the role of the United Nations in combating that global evil. Serbia has achieved significant success in the fight against terrorism, especially at the regional level, and is ready to lend its experience and knowledge to help strengthen other States' counter-terrorism capacities.

Serbia has never supported and will never support the language of ultimatums. We honour and respect the political and economic interests of all Member States, and our approach and actions in protecting our national and international interests are predicated on those positions.

Serbia most strongly condemns the crimes committed by the members of the extremist organization of the Islamic State, particularly the brutal murders. Such forms of terrorism pose one of the most serious threats to international peace and security, and Serbia is committed more than ever to supporting international efforts in the fight against terrorism.

The rapid rise of the Islamic State and its ability to attract fighters from all over the world has caught the attention of the international community. One of the main questions facing the world is the problem of foreign fighters recruited by terrorist organizations such as the Islamic State and Al-Qaida. According to research conducted by the International Centre for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence, based in London, the most significant regions outside Western Europe and the Middle East for the recruitment of foreign fighters are the Balkans and the countries of the former Soviet Union. The data on foreign fighters for the Balkans vary: up to 140 recruits from Albania and as many as 60 from Bosnia and Herzegovina. The numbers are somewhat smaller from Macedonia — up to 20. From Serbia there have been three and from Bulgaria one, while the number from our province

of Kosovo and Metohija is as high as 150. It must be stopped.

We face new global challenges that call for creative responses, global partnership and flexibility. Serbia is unreservedly committed to the principles of multilateral cooperation and to strengthening the principles and system of the United Nations. In that context, we consider the process of the reform of the United Nations system a historic chance to demonstrate our consistent support for the idea of building consensus among Member States on all key issues. Serbia is ready for constructive cooperation and respect for all participants in the dialogue, which will contribute to the greater efficiency of the United Nations system. Serbia supports the reform of the Security Council.

Serbia will do its utmost to help bring solutions to global security problems and sustainable development. Traditionally, Serbia has supported the multilateral approach in the field of disarmament and arms control, proceeding from the conviction that in a world of rising interdependence and complexity, common challenges call for common solutions.

It is with great concern that we follow the developments related to the rapid spread of the Ebola virus in the countries of Western Africa. We extend our condolences to the Presidents and peoples of Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone for the great number of victims. The disease, unprecedented in the extent of its transmission and its high mortality rate, threatens to cause one of the biggest humanitarian crises of the world today and calls for immediate collective action, since it is a problem that belongs to all of us. It is very important in this situation that States Members of the United Nations have recognized the magnitude of the problem and have supported the Secretary-General's proposal to establish the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response. Serbia is ready to join in and contribute to the collective effort with its scientific and medical capacities and in any other way.

The world has changed, but for the poorest it has remained the same. The greater instability of developing countries is a clear indicator that they continue to be in need of assistance. The international community must therefore pay appropriate attention to that group of countries, primarily through financial support, the development of new technologies and the training of human resources. Those are measures meant to lead to the eradication of poverty and the strengthening of institutions.

For Serbia, the top priority is poverty eradication, but the goals of inclusive education, health, gender equality, sustainable energy and, in particular, sustainable economic growth and employment are just as important. Jump-starting the economy is the mission to which we shall devote the greatest attention in the coming period, although always mindful of the issues I have mentioned, in order to ensure prosperity for all our citizens.

We must acknowledge the higher degree of socioeconomic interlinkage that exists if we are to come up with fresh ideas. We must design new ways to overcome the current crises in global management and study our options for formulating and implementing political solutions.

Serbia stands united with the leaders of the entire world in the endeavour aimed at bringing prosperity to humankind. That is a responsibility that we all share. Not only can we achieve much by working together, but we can achieve much more together. That is why the establishment of a united, global front around the idea of the common destiny and interests of humankind, which we all share, should be the first step that we, the States Members of the United Nations, must make as we attempt to solve new global challenges.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Serbia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Michel Joseph Martelly, President of the Republic of Haiti

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Haiti.

Mr. Michel Joseph Martelly, President of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Michel Joseph Martelly, President of the Republic of Haiti, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Martelly (*spoke in French*): Since the Charter of the United Nations was adopted in San

Francisco, the international community has made it a true act of faith in setting up a new international order based on the ideals and values that elevate human dignity and encourage sustainable development and solidarity among peoples. It is an honour for me to speak before the General Assembly, convened for nearly 70 years, to address key issues of justice, universal peace and security.

I take this opportunity to send Mr. Sam Kutesa my warmest congratulations on his election as the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. His proven experience on international issues and the United Nations system is a guarantee of the success of the work that will be taken up at this session. He can be assured of the full cooperation of the Haitian delegation.

I commend the remarkable work of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. I pay special tribute to him for his courage and commitment to the cause of peace worldwide. As humanitarian crises and conflicts between States threaten the stability and security of peoples of the world, the Secretary-General's leadership has repeatedly demonstrated that there is always a way to resolve our differences through dialogue, understanding and mutual respect.

That is why I encourage the United Nations to continue to support the good relations between the parties on both sides of the Taiwan Strait and the peaceful and constructive approaches to establish lasting peace in East Asia and the East China Sea.

We in the Caribbean have chosen to take the path of dialogue with our neighbour to the east for the good of our two peoples and in order to preserve peace in the region. We believe in the power of dialogue. We are convinced that it is always necessary to engage in negotiation and productive discussions. We readily agreed to come to the negotiating table with our friends from the Dominican Republic to set out the real problens of mutual interest for the benefit of our two peoples and to resolve half-century-old misunderstandings. We welcome the fact that a number of agreements have been reached on issues that were not always easy to resolve. We hope to be able to continue on that path towards a better understanding between two States that share the same island.

Despite a challenging route, 70 years later it is clear that this common project that is the United Nations has lost nothing of its topicality and relevance. At a time when hotbeds of international tension persist, the enlightened Powers of our planet must unite to preserve peace, democracy, stability, human rights and development. In that context, in line with the new realities of this century, Haiti argues strongly for concrete progress in the negotiations for United Nations reform, particularly with regard to the enlargement of the Security Council to include new permanent members.

The example of inclusion must begin where the right to participation is a fundamental right expressed through the Charter of the United Nations. Our voice counts. Our leadership, being responsible, must be expressed through concrete and tangible actions when peace, the health of our environment and the health of our people are threatened. In that connection, I wish to pay tribute to our Cuban brothers, among other peoples of the world, who have supported African countries affected by Ebola.

As much as we have a moral responsibility to raise our voice against injustice whatever its origin, against fanaticism, to reject repression and violence in all its forms and to fight discrimination and prejudices that hinder solidarity among peoples, we also have an obligation to recognize and encourage efforts to unite people.

The legitimacy and credibility of the United Nations depends upon its ability to act quickly and respond effectively in recognizing the added value of each Member State. More than ever, problems must be addressed pragmatically. That is an urgent matter in these times of political tensions on a global scale and of the spread of some diseases that are just as devastating. Moreover, the international community is greatly challenged by the resurgence of a brutal and fanatical international terrorism in a new form. The United Nations is and remains today our best defence against those challenges through respect for the dignity of peoples and through the participation and inclusion of everyone.

Allow me to present the situation in my country, the Republic of Haiti.

The Haitian people are at a decisive turning point in their long march in search of stability, democracy and progress, towards the consolidation of democratic institutions established 27 years ago with the adoption of the 1987 Constitution. After more than two decades punctuated by disasters of all kinds, Haiti has made undeniable progress over the past three years in

terms of consolidating democracy and the rule of law, strengthening its institutions and protecting human rights, reducing poverty and laying the foundations for sustained growth and long-lasting development. We are aware that the road that should lead Haiti to socioeconomic stability is still long. However, the obstacles, however daunting they may be, are not insurmountable.

In terms of security, the situation has improved to the point where Haiti has become one of the safest countries in the Caribbean. The Government has made great efforts to strengthen the professionalism of the Haitian National Police. I maintain and reaffirm my stance on the need for a gradual and orderly withdrawal of United Nations troops from Haitian soil. That process has in fact already commenced, along with the strengthening of the operational capacity of the National Police of Haiti, which will allow it to take over from the forces of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti.

I wish to make a plea for better coordination of the work of United Nations agencies with national institutions and for taking into account the real needs of the country.

With regard to education, 70 per cent of pupils in the first two years of primary school receive a free education. For the first time in Haiti, 5 per cent of the gross domestic product is earmarked for education. Today, the net school enrolment rate has increased significantly. We are working hard to reach the Millennium Development Goals, which are set at 100 per cent in this regard, as the Assembly knows.

In the area of health, we have stepped up efforts to reduce the incidence of diseases such as AIDS, malaria and vector-borne diseases. The significant increase in health centres across the country has improved access to care and led to a reduction in maternal and infant mortality. Maternal mortality fell from 350 to 157 per 100,000 live births per 100,000. Through our Ministry of Health, we were able to build and rehabilitate more than 200 health facilities. And to strengthen governance in health, we are committed to the ongoing training of our health professionals so they can provide better care and services. With regard to cholera, while assuming our duty to our fellow citizens, Haiti calls for a decisive commitment from the United Nations to contribute to the National Plan for the Eradication of Cholera.

With regard to the economy, major reforms have been put in place to improve the business environment. The increased flow of foreign capital and the number of tourists visiting our country are tangible evidence of the improving business climate in Haiti. We are resolutely focused on our goal of making Haiti an investment destination, not a humanitarian destination.

On the political front, Haiti will conduct free, honest and transparent elections as soon as possible for the renewal of democratic and constitutional institutions. That is a necessary step. Democratic rules require it, and I will uphold republican principles until the end. As Head of State, guarantor of the stability of institutions, I have spared no effort to find consensus among all parties and institutions involved in the organization of legislative and municipal elections. Despite the discrepancies, in the spirit of Jean-Jacques Dessalines, I am confident that together we will arrive at such consensus. I look forward to bringing my fellow citizens together around the table to provide that harmonious area marked by the purest ideals that the Haitian people have established for themselves, ideals that we remain firmly committed to.

I would like to reiterate the support of the Republic of Haiti to the fight that the United Nations is leading to eradicate poverty. While waiting for the summit to be held next year in which Member States will decide on the post-2015 development agenda, I can already express the confidence of my Administration in the sustainable development goals intended to replace the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. Mendonça e Moura (Portugal), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The world currently has enormous resources. Our challenge is to find effective ways and means to ensure that they are distributed in an equitable and just manner. I remain convinced that our commitment to reduce poverty and inequality throughout the world is necessary. It is in that spirit that the Republic of Haiti joins the international community to contribute its part to meet that challenge. It is suitable, therefore, that we heighten the effectiveness of the Organization and give it the necessary and sufficient resources in the exercise of that mission.

Our goal is for that truly to become the basis of a system of security and collective solidarity that is able to ensure the rule of law and to preserve peace and international security; a system able to prioritize basic freedoms and human rights; a system able to promote strong growth that is careful to respect the environment

and development that responds to current needs without risking the future of generations to come. It is up to us, on the eve of the seventieth anniversary of the Charter of the United Nations, to transmit that new spirit, so indispensable to the promotion and defense of the universal values of which we are the custodians.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Haiti for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Michel Joseph Martelly, President of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Emanuel Mori, President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia.

Mr. Emanuel Mori, President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Emanuel Mori, President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mori: I would like to congratulate Mr. Sam Kutesa on his election to lead the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. I wish to thank him and the outgoing President, Mr. John Ashe, for their leadership. I must also commend Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who has more than measured up to the tremendous tasks associated with his high Office.

Allow me to extend my sympathies to the families of the victims of the tragic and appalling events that have recently unfolded around the world, from the passengers on Malaysia Airlines Flight MH-17 to the recent beheadings by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, to the victims of the Ebola epidemic and natural disasters. We will never forget those tragedies and the loss of lives.

I am humbled to speak in this hallowed Hall for the last time as President of my island nation, the Federated States of Micronesia. Like my predecessors, I come with great respect for this honourable institution. This global Organization is best suited to address and solve the pressing issues of our global family.

I have come to the United Nations compelled by the dictates of conscience. We are all stewards of God's creation here on Earth. The bounties of Mother Nature are priceless, and we all bear the obligation to sustainably manage them.

Over 30 years ago, small island countries brought the issue of climate change to the attention of the United Nations. Some Members have criticized us for focusing too much on climate change and sea-level rise, but those issues influence our every decision and affect every aspect of life in our islands. Across the globe, the deadly impacts of climate change on the environment are stark realities. Others can afford to speak of them as future threats, but we in small island countries are already facing the impacts, which are worse than science predicted.

Micronesia means "little islands", with atolls rising only a few feet above sea level. According to the *Fifth Assessment Report* of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, human-caused climate change is leading to sea-level rise, more frequent and more intense typhoons and severe droughts. A small increase in the sea level would be a catastrophe for the atolls of Micronesia. Our islands contribute almost nothing towards the causes of climate change, and yet we face the brunt of its adverse impacts. Climate change threatens our food and water security, the health of our population, the health of our oceans and coral reefs, our biodiversity and the very existence of our island nations.

What are we doing about it? Collectively, in order for small islands to survive, the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) advocates for limiting global warming to well below a 1.5°C increase above the pre-industrial temperature. That requires immediate action from all stakeholders. Small Island Developing States (SIDS) must not be asked to fight climate change by themselves. On that note, we support the recently launched World Bank initiative on carbon pricing.

Next year, the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21), to be held in Paris, will establish a new climate change treaty, which will go into effect in 2020. However, the United Nations Environment Programme has identified a pre-2020 emissions gap. Therefore, AOSIS has also made

an important proposal to the work plan on enhancing mitigation ambitions in order to close the gap.

Micronesia has made an equally important proposal to amend the Montreal Protocol to phase down the production and consumption of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), which are powerful greenhouse gases. That action can reduce the global average temperature increase by up to 0.5°C by the end of this century. Reducing HFCs and other short-lived climate pollutants can reduce the rate of sea-level rise by 25 per cent. Near-term climate mitigation will give all atolls around the globe a chance to survive.

The Montreal Protocol's success and enormous potential to protect the climate was recognized in *The Economist* this week. The magazine has a separate editorial entitled "Paris via Montreal: The quickest way to cut greenhouse gases is to expand the Montreal Protocol". Indeed, the success of the Montreal Protocol in the next six months is our ticket to a successful outcome in Paris at COP 21. I commend the United States of America and China for continuing to work to fulfil their agreement to use the Montreal Protocol to reduce HFCs. I call on other world leaders to join Micronesia and adopt the proposed HFC amendment.

In the face of already occurring climate change impacts, the best small island nations can do on the ground is to try to anticipate and adapt to climate change and instil the best possible disaster risk reduction and response policies. Adaptation is therefore a priority in Micronesia's Climate Change Act, which was recognized at the recent world summit of the Global Legislators Organization for a Balanced Environment. The Act implements our nationwide integrated disaster risk management and climate change policy. The goal of the policy is two-fold: first, to achieve economic growth and self-reliance within a framework of sustainable development, and secondly, to minimize the risks associated with all human-induced and natural hazards, including those associated with climate change.

Micronesia has also developed an agriculture policy to address food and water security and strengthen economic development. The policy also provides the basis for action to revitalize sustainable agriculture, while recognizing the major role played by traditional farming systems and the importance of climate-resilient crops. Other key national actions of Micronesia and other SIDS are reflected in the Majuro Declaration for Climate Leadership and the Palau Declaration on "The Ocean: Life and Future".

In this International Year of Small Island Developing States, the United Nations has convened a number of important conferences whose outcomes must be incorporated into the post-2015 development agenda. In that regard, I stress the critical importance of implementing the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action — Samoa Pathway — the purpose of which is to stimulate sustainable development in SIDS through durable and genuine partnerships.

We note with appreciation the report by the Chairs of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals and fully endorse the proposed sustainable development goals (SDGs). We rely on our development partners to assist us in undertaking the actions identified in the Samoa Pathway and in fulfilling the SDGs in ways that are appropriate for our peoples and our cultures.

Clean energy and energy efficiency are two of the key engines for advancing our sustainable and low-carbon development. Therefore, our national energy policy gives priority to energy efficiency and renewable energy. By 2020, the share of renewable energy sources will be at least 30 per cent of total energy production, while electricity efficiency will increase by 50 per cent. That will require harnessing sunshine, which we have in abundance, as well as renewable wind and marine energy resources. I call on our development partners to assist us in implementing our national energy policy, including through the SIDS Renewable Energy Initiative.

Our ocean and its resources are of paramount importance, but they are threatened by climate change and ocean acidification, which damage coral reefs and could alter the migration patterns of tuna, our most commercially valuable resource. Foreign vessels, which enjoy unprecedented returns from harvesting our exclusive economic zone, need to help us maintain the health, productivity and resilience of our ocean. Micronesia must also receive fair compensation for the value of its resources.

As part of a programme of sustainable use, we must reduce the amount of by-catch being discarded, bring it to shore and put it to good use. Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU fishing) continues to threaten our ocean resources and undermines our economic sustainability. We all must abide by the rules. IUU fishing must be stopped.

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) have become a leading cause of death in the Pacific. Therefore, Pacific leaders have declared NCDs an epidemic. Such diseases are lifestyle diseases, but they are compounded by climate change, which destroys our food crops and contaminates our water supplies. Tackling that multisectoral issue requires broad cooperation and support.

Human trafficking is one of the most serious social diseases of modern society. It robs individuals of their dignity, particularly women and children. Profiting from human misery is despicable. Micronesia supports the eradication of trafficking in all its forms. Objective and transparent ratings of countries will help achieve that goal.

We urge the establishment of the "One UN" approach for the North Pacific. We are now benefiting from the United Nations Joint Presence in the region, but we need to increase its efficiency at the country level. The One UN approach is timely as we position ourselves to implement the Samoa Pathway and the post-2015 development agenda, and it will help us address our national priorities.

Despite the United Nations target of setting aside 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance, most developed nations fall far short of that goal. Small island developing States face unique challenges owing to our extreme vulnerabilities, including climate change. The need for financial and technical assistance from development partners is greater than ever, especially for human resources development and the capacity-building of domestic institutions.

Internationally agreed financial mechanisms such as the Green Climate Fund must be fully capitalized and sufficiently scaled up to support the post-2015 development agenda. We applaud Germany, France and six other nations for pledging specific sums. We urge those countries and the other major economic Powers that are also the major polluters to deliver the funds.

My Government has liberalized its telecommunications system, and the World Bank is providing assistance in the form of grants for installing a state-of-the-art fibre-optic system in my country. That much-needed infrastructure will spur economic and social development. We continue to look to the World Bank, the International Telecommunication Union, the Asian Development Bank and other development partners to help us accelerate implementation of that new system and provide for cyber-security.

The reform of the Security Council is long overdue. A reformed Council should reflect the political realities of today. It would be inconceivable to have a reformed Council without permanent seats for Japan, Germany, Brazil and India, as well as representation for Africa.

Micronesia is confident that the United Nations can maintain international peace and security. It shines like a bright beacon of hope for those suffering from the ravages of war. Micronesia condemns senseless killings, no matter where they occur. The Middle East is a specific trouble spot that deserves this body's attention. Peace can be achieved through mutual respect and economic stability, not by using civilian lives as shields.

Micronesia also looks to the United Nations to effectively address the global security threats posed by climate change. Micronesia has taken an active role in the international sustainable development and climate change negotiation processes. We will continue seeking solutions to those challenges, out of the conviction that it is our moral obligation to protect Mother Nature and her bounties. All countries must work together to protect our children's future.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Emanuel Mori, President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Charles Angelo Savarin, President of the Commonwealth of Dominica

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Commonwealth of Dominica.

Mr. Charles Angelo Savarin, President of the Commonwealth of Dominica, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Charles Angelo Savarin, President of the Commonwealth of Dominica, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Savarin: I would like to begin by congratulating His Excellency Mr. Sam Kutesa, former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda, on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank His Excellency Mr. John Ashe for his leadership of the Assembly at its sixty-eighth session, and to salute Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his continued efforts to promote peace, security and development throughout the world.

Dominica is among six small independent States in the Caribbean that, together with three non-independent small island territories, constitute the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). The OECS States are not simply small island developing States (SIDS), they are very small island developing States, and therefore among the most vulnerable members of the United Nations family. Twenty years after the adoption of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, and 10 years after the approval of the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation, most of the commitments made to promote sustainable development in SIDS have yet to be delivered. However, we remain hopeful that the recently concluded third United Nations Conference on Small Island Developing States, held in Apia, Samoa, will have been a watershed moment for SIDS. We expect the draft outcome document of the Conference (A/CONF. 223/3) to create a new basis on which to address the implementation gaps that continue to stymie any movement towards sustainable development in SIDS.

I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate the Government and people of Samoa on hosting a major international conference. Their tenacity, determination and commitment are a demonstration of what can be achieved by SIDS, despite the many challenges they face. One major outcome of the Samoa Conference was the historic establishment of an all-SIDS — that is, SIDS-SIDS — initiative aimed at creating an international organization to serve as a platform for the development of sustainable energy in SIDS, known as SIDS DOCK. On 1 September, a treaty formally establishing SIDS DOCK as an international organization was opened for signature. Twenty of the 30 members of the Alliance of Small Island States have signed on to the treaty. As Chair of the SIDS DOCK Steering Committee, the Government of Dominica wishes to thank the host country, Samoa, the other Member States that are signatories to the treaty, our partners — Denmark, Japan, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the Clinton Foundation, the secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environmental Programme, the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre — and the SIDS DOCK secretariat and all the volunteers for making that historic event possible.

Unfortunately, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the post-2015 agenda have not progressed at a pace that those of us in the SIDS group would have liked. Almost 15 years since the Millennium Declaration was adopted (resolution 55/2), only a few countries in the developing world have registered tangible gains. The majority continue to wait for the promised improvements in their living conditions. Nonetheless, Dominica has been able to meet most of the MDGs, notably in reducing poverty, improving access to education, ensuring environmental sustainability and building strong bilateral and multilateral partnerships. Our progress in poverty reduction has been noted by the Caribbean Development Bank, which stated in its 2009 report on Dominica that

> "the level of poverty in Dominica has fallen from 39 per cent in 2003 to 28.8 per cent in 2009. Absolute poverty, as measured by the indigence rate, has also declined from 10 per cent in 2003 to 3.1 per cent in 2009."

Our achievements in education have also surpassed the targets set by the MDGs. Recognizing the importance of education to our development agenda, Dominica continues to make major investments in improving access to quality education for our people. To date, we can boast of universal access to education at the early childhood, primary and secondary levels, and access to post-secondary education is available to all secondary-school graduates.

Dominica has always been guided by the principle of the sustainable use of its natural resources and the protection of its physical environment. For those reasons, Dominica has been called the "Nature Island of the Caribbean". We therefore have much that we can share with the United Nations family on the subject of the sustainable use of natural resources. In our efforts to protect and ensure environmental sustainability and to rid our country of its reliance on fossil fuels for generating electricity, the Government of Dominica has invested, and continues to invest, in renewable energy.

Today about 20 per cent of the island's electricity needs are met from "clean" hydropower.

Additionally, however, the Government has been pursuing the development of the country's geothermal resources. To date, the Government has invested over $20 million in geothermal development. The first production and reinjection wells have been completed, and the results of the flow tests indicate that the geothermal reservoir has a capacity to generate sufficient electricity for domestic consumption and for export to the neighbouring French territories of Martinique and Guadeloupe. The first plant for purely domestic consumption is expected to be commissioned in 2016.

Dominica's development achievements in general, and the attainment of the MDGs in particular, have been realized through the strong, visionary and compassionate leadership of Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit and his Cabinet, complemented by our hard-working citizens and the kind cooperation of our development partners. Our partnerships with the European Union, the United States of America, Japan and other developed countries have all contributed significantly to the progress we have been able to make thus far. The recent approval by the World Bank of the Pilot Programme for Climate Resilience, which will undertake a number of infrastructure projects designed to transform Dominica into a climate-resilient and low-carbon developing country and is expected, among other benefits, to positively impact agricultural productivity and food security in our rural communities.

South-South cooperation with partners from developing countries, notably the People's Republic of China, Cuba, Morocco and Venezuela, and from the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America, has been able to complement the decreasing assistance from traditional partners. We embrace all our development partners and look forward to the deepening and strengthening of our partnerships for the benefits of all our people.

In spite of those achievements, we are a long way from where we aspire to be. The spectre of the deadly Ebola disease and the scourges of HIV/AIDS and non-communicable diseases has the potential to significantly impact our people and threaten the gains made so far by small island developing States. Therefore, that myriad of challenges calls for collective global action to protect the gains that small island States like Dominica have been able to achieve over the past two decades and to lay a path for development that is sustainable and people-focused.

Additionally, the impact of climate change remains an existential threat to the people throughout the world who call small island States their homes. The location, level of development and vulnerability of our islands make them very susceptible to the impact of climate change. Very often, we refer to climate change and its effects as a phenomenon that is to impact our global community at some future date. The unfortunate reality is that SIDS have already been suffering from the impact of climate change. The increasing severity of storms and hurricanes is becoming more prevalent, and with every strike the extreme weather claims lives and threatens our development efforts. According to a 2008 publication by the United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Caribbean has the second-greatest risk of hurricanes in the world. The report also highlights the increased frequency of tropical cyclones in our region.

The islands of the Caribbean are also prone to earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, droughts, torrential rains with accompanying landslides and flash flooding. We in the Caribbean have therefore been on the receiving end of the impact of climate change for decades. A case in point is the impact of Hurricane Ivan, a category-3 system that devastated the island of Grenada on 7 September 2004. Hurricane Ivan exposed the vulnerability that is inherent in SIDS. Twenty-eight lives were lost and 18,000 people were left without shelter, food or belongings. A post-Ivan study conducted by the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States reported that:

> "The macro-economic assessment of the damages caused by Hurricane Ivan, which wreaked havoc on Grenada, inflicted damages totalling $1 billion, more than twice the value of that country's GDP".

In more recent times, on 24 December 2013, a time outside the traditional hurricane season, the Caribbean islands of Dominica, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines were severely affected by a trough system that brought with it heavy rains and high winds. That slow-moving weather system left behind approximately $128 million worth of direct damage. Within less than 12 hours, each of those countries suffered significant loss: Dominica — $17 million, or 3.4 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP); Saint

Lucia — $19 million, or 1.4 per cent of GDP; and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines — $93 million, or 12.8 per cent. The indirect impacts, which include the loss of agricultural production and interruptions in other economic activities, such as tourism, would increase the overall effect significantly. The most devastating hurricane to hit Dominica in living memory was Hurricane David, on 29 August 1979, a category-5 hurricane that left the island devastated as if by war, resulting in 43 deaths and with all public utilities, infrastructure, 60 per cent of homes, roads and sea defences totally destroyed.

Such natural disasters affect the daily lives of our people and significantly retard our efforts to bring about social and economic development. We therefore call on all States Members of the United Nations to take immediate actions to approve a legally binding agreement to reduce the impact of climate change. The climate change agenda must be an integral part of the post-2015 agenda.

The creation of wealth and the generation of economic growth are essential for the eradication of poverty and the improvement of the quality of life of our people. However, economic growth and development should be inclusive and sustainable. The creation of jobs and the delivery of social services should touch the lives of all our people, especially the indigenous people, the elderly, the disadvantaged, the disabled, the vulnerable, and those people who are excluded from mainstream society. The development of agriculture, tourism, the energy sector and industry should therefore be inclusive and sustainable.

Dominica therefore joins the rest of the Caribbean Community in calling for development partners to conduct their macroeconomic and trade policies in a way that facilitates opportunities for SIDS to promote economic growth, shrink existing income gaps, reduce the levels of poverty and achieve their development aspirations. Those policies should include, but not be limited to, a change in the criteria for the graduation of SIDS from preferential access to multilateral concessionary financing. The new criteria must take into account the inherent vulnerabilities of SIDS and the need for building resilience to the impact of climate change and the vagaries of the global financial, economic and trading systems. Therefore, any measure that inhibits any State Member of the United Nations family from becoming fully integrated into the global financial and trading system should be removed.

In that vein, the economic embargo against our brothers and sisters in Cuba continues to be of concern to us in the Caribbean. That unilateral action by the United States of America against our sister Caribbean island, whatever the excuses might have been 55 years ago, cannot be justified today, nor can the suffering of our brothers and sisters in the Republic of Cuba, as a result of their exclusion for 55 years from the world banking and trading system, be defended. It is well established that, whatever the objectives were 55 years ago, they are not likely to be achieved through the continuation of the embargo. The Government of Dominica therefore calls on the United States to heed the call of the General Assembly to lift the embargo against Cuba and to support the full integration of the Cuban people into the global financial and trading systems.

The embargo notwithstanding, the Cuban people continue to make a tremendous contribution to human development across the globe. For decades, Cuba has been training doctors, nurses, engineers and other professionals, deploying them to provide technical assistance to developing countries as part of its South-South cooperation. Cuba also offers professional training in various disciplines to thousands of students from all over the developing world.

Cuba continues to add its voice in the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking in the Caribbean and the rest of the world. It is for that reason that Dominica fails to comprehend the continued listing of Cuba as a State sponsor of terrorism. We therefore call for the removal of Cuba from the list of countries that sponsor terrorism. Our efforts in the region should be focused instead on combating the real threats to global peace and security.

Similarly, the events unfolding in Ukraine are a proxy tug-of-war between the European Union and the United States, on the one hand, and the Russian Federation, on the other. The Ukrainian people are the victims of the contest, which is a throwback to the Cold War.

The United Kingdom, when confronted with the question of Irish nationalism in 1918, resolved the matter through the ballot box with a county-by-county referendum on the future of Ireland. Most counties opted for independence, but five counties opted for continued union with the United Kingdom. Three years later, the island was partitioned into the Republic of Ireland

and Northern Ireland, the latter remaining part of the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom currently faces the question of Scottish independence. Once again, only last week on 18 September, the United Kingdom resorted to the ballot box to decide the matter. While the supporters of the campaign in favour of independence will be disappointed by the results, the real victors are not the supporters of the campaign for continued union with the United Kingdom but democracy itself.

With that experience, the United Kingdom is uniquely placed to counsel the European Union, the United States, Kyiv and Moscow about how to grant the people of Ukraine the same opportunity to decide their destiny for themselves, according to their regional preferences and without coercion either from the East or from the West. Such an approach would end the paralysis in the Security Council, thereby creating a real partnership among the United States, the Russian Federation and China and enabling the United Nations to fulfil its mandate to assist in conflict resolution, combat the greatest threats facing the world today, namely, armed conflict and terrorism, and create a more peaceful international community.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate to the General Assembly that the impact of climate change is a major threat to the development efforts and to the very existence of small island developing States. The incidence of severe weather conditions, including coastal erosion and sea-level rise, continues to impact island States in the worst ways possible. Our ability to survive depends not only on the individual and collective actions taken by SIDS, but also on the actions of the rest of the international community.

A legally binding outcome to the climate change negotiations is a critical component in a series of actions to be taken by Member States. That should be buttressed by a post-2015 agenda that includes poverty eradication, increased access to education and training, health care, potable water and sanitation, and promotes sustainable and inclusive economic development.

The outcomes of the third United Nations Conference on SIDS in Samoa should serve as a blueprint for the growth and development of SIDS. That should include the restructuring of the international financial and trading architecture so that the vulnerabilities and special circumstances of SIDS are taken into account. That new configuration will allow for the development of SIDS through sustainable agriculture, tourism and inclusive industrial development. However, such efforts must be propelled by sustainable energy that maximizes the use of renewable SIDS-appropriate energy resources in the most energy efficient manner.

Finally, I wish all participants in this sixty-ninth session every success in their deliberations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Commonwealth of Dominica for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Charles Angelo Savarin, President of the Commonwealth of Dominica, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Gjorge Ivanov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Mr. Gjorge Ivanov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Gjorge Ivanov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ivanov (*spoke in Macedonian; English text provided by the delegation*): I am greatly honoured to address this forum and to share with the General Assembly the views of the Republic of Macedonia on issues of global concern. In the current dynamic, hyper-connected and changing world, one thing remains constant — the need for greater predictability, a quality on which peace, security and stability depend, as well as global welfare and progress.

Humankind today faces many challenges, of which two demand our full attention. The first one relates to the natural world, and the second relates to the international order. The root of the first challenge is the human neglect of natural laws. The second challenge arises from the violation of international law.

Guided by the idea that man is the measure of all things, humankind has made a wrong calculation. We are competing in a race for progress and new discoveries that goes hand in hand with a race for the

unequal exploitation of resources — a race whose only rule is that there are no rules. Everything is possible and everything is allowed, including the pollution of the air we breathe, the water we drink and the soil that produces our food.

As humankind, we were selfishly focused on immediate needs and desires. We forget that natural resources have been given to us in trust to preserve for our children. In opposing nature, we are undermining the foundations of our future. Our citizens, States and economies have already begun to pay the price. We will face a period of extreme weather conditions, when it will become ever more likely that cities will be flooded, rivers will dry up, crops will fail and the price of food will increase.

Natural disasters at the global level serve as loud alarms telling us that climate change is a new reality that is changing our lives and the lives of future generations. Recently our region, South-Eastern Europe, was hit by such a disaster and reminded of that reality.

The Republic of Macedonia is the first country in our region to have completed its third national report under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. We have already defined the next steps in all key sectors of the economy and society at the national and local levels for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation by promoting strategies and efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase energy efficiency.

We welcome the initiative of the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session, His Excellency Mr. Sam Kutesa, to take decisive and concrete measures to remedy two of the world's great miseries: increased global poverty and diminished access to basic resources, including clean water, education, health care and a clean environment.

Here at the United Nations, we are all one family; as a family, we should help each other to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. But we must focus on two things, that is, reducing global poverty and ensuring sustainable development.

Next year will be one of great expectations worldwide, including the expectation that a genuine synergy involving all the major challenges will finally be achieved, inter alia, climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction and sustainable development. We expect the post-2015 development agenda to include global, holistic, scientifically grounded, feasible and legally binding goals aimed at ensuring a safer world for our descendants. However, we should be aware that the natural balance is disturbed and that many things will therefore not be as before. We will need to learn to live in a changed world.

Just as the challenge posed by nature is a result of the human neglect of natural laws, the challenge to the international order arises from the violation of international law by some countries. I said before that we are all one United Nations family. And in every family there are rules of conduct and mutual respect. Families without such rules are known as dysfunctional families.

The Republic of Macedonia is strongly committed to respecting the Charter of the United Nations, which is one of the primary foundations of the purposes and principles of international law. The rule of law is incomplete and impossible without respect for human rights. As a member of the Human Rights Council, the Republic of Macedonia is committed, in spirit and with determination, to protecting and promoting human rights and the right to human dignity throughout the world. The Republic of Macedonia has achieved the highest standards of respect for human rights and the rights of communities worldwide. That is possible thanks to the Macedonian model of coexistence as a model of integration without assimilation, which is not based on tolerance alone, but rather on respect for diversity.

In fact, the human rights and human dignity of Macedonian citizens are being continually denied by one Member of the United Nations family and a member of NATO and the European Union. Identity and language are inseparable parts of our personality, of freedom of expression, of human rights. Those are universally accepted principles that should never be compromised. Respect for human rights, including the rights to self-identification and human dignity, represent the highest values of the United Nations and are among the political criteria for the Republic of Macedonia's accession to the European Union.

The country that is blocking my country is demanding the impossible, namely, that we give up the Macedonian identity, thereby violating the fundamental principles of the European Union in order to meet conditions for membership in it. That would force my country to violate a rule and betray the global family.

In 2008 at the NATO Summit in Bucharest, basing its position on international law, my country

refused to change the identity of the Macedonian people as a precondition for its already well-deserved membership in NATO. On 17 November 2008, we launched proceedings against our southern neighbour under the auspices of the International Court of Justice, again acting on the basis of international law. On 5 December 2011, on the basis of international law, the International Court of Justice ruled that the obstruction of the Republic of Macedonia's integration in NATO was illegal and that international commitments had been violated. For years my country has tolerated unprincipled and illegal blockades, and we have done so because of international law — because we believe that only international law can provide predictability and certainty on behalf of world order.

By our example we have demonstrated in principle how other countries should respect international law. Even the International Court of Justice, in an almost unanimous decision, concluded that we had acted correctly. Despite that, the Republic of Macedonia is ready for a mutually acceptable solution under the framework provided by United Nations resolutions, the Interim Accord and the judgment of the International Court of Justice. The issue of identity has never been part of that framework, because identity can neither be discussed nor negotiated. I therefore urge the United Nations and the competent authorities to become engaged and to devote maximum attention to finding mutually acceptable solutions within the framework of international law.

Two years ago, I was at the General Assembly (see A/67/PV.12) and remember well that the session was preceded by the High-level Meeting on the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels (see A/67/PV.3). The General Assembly debated the Secretary-General's report (A/66/749) entitled "Delivering justice: programme of action to strengthen the rule of law at the national and international levels". Two years have passed, and we are still debating. We are still waiting for rulings of the International Court of Justice to be respected.

Our southern neighbour continues daily to violate international law. It continues to violate the various 1993 United Nations resolutions on the subject, as well as the 1995 Interim Accord. It also still ignores the ruling of the highest legal authority in the world. But that ruling does not apply only to the State that blocks us, the ruling applies, erga omnes, to all member States of the international organizations that still block our membership. Every blockade in our European and Euro-Atlantic integration process undermines the international legal order. By tolerating the blockades, a dangerous precedent is created, one of mutual blocking and blackmailing that is motivated by narrow national interests at the expense of the collective interests of the European Union and NATO. Hence, dysfunctional families are created that do not respect the rules of conduct. Disrespect for the highest legal authorities implies an erosion of the culture of respect for international law in the world. Such an erosion suspends the rule of law and leaves room for anarchy.

For years, we have pertinently pointed out that, if someone pollutes the spring, then its flow and the entire watershed will also be contaminated. If someone questions basic human rights — the right to human dignity and the right to self-identification — then the rest of international law will also be challenged. We have warned of the violation of international law in the case of the Republic of Macedonia, but others have rarely listened. Today, the price we pay is higher. Everyone calls upon international law when others are expected to respect it, but they ignore it when they themselves must respect it. We do not want to follow the example of those who break the law, because we are aware of the consequences.

If we remove one link, one factor or one participant from an ecosystem, that can cause instability and unpredictability in its functioning. We live in a world and an age of global interdependence, a global ecosystem. When a State fails to comply with international commitments, it encourages others to do the same. Today we are witnessing the consequences of such behaviour. Under the conditions of an impaired international legal system, the world has been rapidly sinking into the dark areas of anarchic international relations.

The world order is in a latent crisis. The processes of global interdependence and subnational fragmentation have transformed our previous perceptions of the world. In less than a decade, we have experienced two major changes. The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 shook the global political and security order, and the collapse of Lehman Brothers on 15 September 2008 struck the global economic order. The only remaining order of the world we used to know is the international legal order. However, the legal system has been challenged as well.

The Republic of Macedonia sees its future in NATO and the European Union. With its expansion policy, the European Union has long served as a beacon lighting the path for the States of East and South-East Europe towards the more advanced European family. We were recently informed that this beacon will go out of service in the next five years. If it does, there will be the danger of shipwreck. The region of South-Eastern Europe remains vulnerable. I want to send a message to partners in the European Union that by postponing its enlargement, the EU has been creating a vacuum in what has been historically the most porous geopolitical space. Sooner or later, that vacuum will be filled. That is why we need as soon as possible to integrate all the Balkan countries within the European Union. While the membership card is not that important for us, the necessary membership criteria and standards are important. In our case, the European Union's beacon has grown dim because of its toleration of a devaluation of international law, human rights and the right to human dignity, which provide the essential fuel that powers the beacon. In losing its light, the European Union is losing what has been most valuable — its power to motivate States to strive for even higher values, standards and criteria.

I also want to send a clear message to my region that in these circumstances, now is the time for Balkan countries to demonstrate maximum solidarity and unity in achieving shared goals — cooperation on such issues as integration, our economies, infrastructure, energy, environmental protection, terrorism and the suppression of organized crime. We must resist and jointly address those shared challenges. In a world that is rapidly changing, the need for greater predictability in international relations remains. Only international law can offer the reliability and predictability on which world peace and the progress of our countries depend. International law is the only barrier that protects us from a disaster within the international order, and international law has been constantly breached.

We are in this Hall today as the highest representatives of our countries in the world family. I am confident that most members of the General Assembly agree with those conclusions. But the question is, how many of us are willing to take action to change things. I wish that we were not in a situation where we could simply debate and draw conclusions over and over again. It is high time that we start with actions. This is the last call. We should ask ourselves whether the natural order has an alternative and what that might be. Our failure to comply with natural laws has led to accelerated climate change — to more floods, earthquakes and fires. The failure to comply with international law has contributed to increased anarchy in international relations and interventions against those who have flooded, burned and destroyed the natural order today.

Not long ago, in August, the sixth United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Forum, held in Bali, focused on unity in diversity. While the world has been talking about unity in diversity, radical extremists have become united in their intentions to destroy those who differ. As we speak, millions of faithful believers around the world feel the pain caused by narrow-minded individuals and groups imbued with religious fundamentalism. As we speak, the systematic destruction of individuals and communities is occurring. As we speak, hundreds of thousands are being persecuted. Their homes have been devastated, their temples destroyed and their past erased, and their future is in question.

Recognizing that terrorism cannot and should not be identified with any religion, nation or civilization, we strongly condemn mass atrocities committed by anyone anywhere. We commend yesterday's debate in the Security Council (see S/PV.7272). What we need are urgent measures. The Republic of Macedonia has already taken the first steps. Recently, we adopted amendments to the criminal code regarding foreign fighters, who are a real threat to the entire region. Everything that is happening in the crisis hotspots reflects on Europe, which has its own crisis hotspot now in Ukraine.

It is sad that in the twenty-first century we have witnessed tragedies in the Middle East and North Africa. It is sad that this is happening in Europe, in a year that has been declared an international year of peace. It is obvious that, on the centenary of the First World War, the lessons of the past have not yet been learned.

The majority of victims of the Ukraine crisis are innocent civilians. There have also been material losses. The Republic of Macedonia supports all efforts aimed at restoring peace and stability in that country. I am convinced that political dialogue and diplomacy will enable Ukraine to address the challenges and regain its path towards a prosperous future for its citizens.

The world is facing serious challenges, including natural disasters and political issues — both of which

mask double standards. Double standards generate issues that introduce equations with many unknowns, leading to a world where the only thing we are certain of is that the future of our children is uncertain. Only respect for international law will ensure greater certainty, thereby helping to avoid storms in our dynamic world.

The Republic of Macedonia supports the reform of the Security Council as a significant part of the overall reform of the United Nations. It is a complex and sensitive process. We agree with the proposal to negotiate the actual text. At the same time, we stress that the text must receive maximum support from the membership and ensure respect for international law and international commitments and rules. Such reform must provide greater predictability in the world. As Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said at the opening of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, "We shall have neither peace nor development without respect for human rights and the rule of law" (*A/67/PV.6, p. 3*). Only international law provides the opportunity to solve the equation and thus to plan the future, based on security, stability and peace.

Young people continue to be the main victims of double standards and violations of the norms of national and international law by prior and current generations, as well as of natural disasters. They breathe the polluted air, drink the polluted water and eat food grown in contaminated soil. They will become the victims of systems of injustice unless we do something to change that.

In 2003, we initiated the first Forum of the Dialogue among Civilizations, which was held in Ohrid under the leadership of former President Trajkovski. The Dialogue among Civilizations, both chronologically and in essence, predated the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, which was formed in 2005 at the initiative of the Governments of Spain and Turkey. Indeed, only through dialogue will we join together in an alliance of civilizations. The Brdo-Brijuni Process Meeting was recently held with the participation of the German Chancellor, Her Excellency Mrs. Merkel. An entire chapter of the joint declaration is devoted to youth. As President of the Republic of Macedonia, it will be my honour to organize, together with the Director-General of UNESCO, Ms. Irina Bokova, the upcoming Dialogue among Civilizations in 2015, which will be entirely dedicated to youth.

In the year when we are marking the centenary of the First World War, we recall the positive experiences of Charles de Gaulle and Konrad Adenauer in establishing the Franco-German Youth Office in 1963. That experience of cooperation among young people should be applied in establishing an office for young Europeans from all the countries of South-Eastern Europe, transforming our region into a Europeanized Balkans. We call on the leaders to devote greater time and attention and invest in youth. We cannot change our past, but we can, by changing the present, change the past of the generations to come. That is why it is necessary to educate young people about the importance of dialogue, which involves respect and the acceptance of diversity.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Gjorge Ivanov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ikililou Dhoinine, President of the Union of the Comoros

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Union of the Comoros.

Mr. Ikililou Dhoinine, President of the Union of the Comoros, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ikililou Dhoinine, President of the Union of the Comoros, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Dhoinine (*spoke in French*): Let me begin by conveying to the United States authorities my delegation's heartfelt gratitude for their always warm hospitality in hosting this great annual event here in New York. I also express my sincere congratulations to the President and wish him full success in conducting the work of the Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. Finally, on behalf of my delegation and myself I renew our full gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his commitment to serving our Organization.

The current session — the sixty-ninth — is taking place at a crucial moment in the history of our Organization, a crucible of multilateralism and global diplomacy that has, over time, become an ever more precious and indispensable tool for peace and security in the world. The session is being held on the eve of our Organization's seventieth anniversary, which we will celebrate one year hence in this beautiful city of New York. We will celebrate it here, at a venue renowned for the discussions and ongoing dialogue that place humankind and the environment at the forefront of concerns, with a view to fostering peace in international relations. In the light of the wisdom and experience of its 69 years, our Organization must find fresh strength and vitality and renew its commitment to a world continually faced with challenges and threats that change and become more unpredictable with each passing day.

The current session also provides us with an important opportunity to carry out a comprehensive assessment of our Organization's work and undertake the preparations to ensure that 2015 will be the year of reform, on the occasion of our seventieth birthday. Clearly, as part of that process, we should take greater account, first, of new complications, such as those related to the extreme vulnerability of small island developing States, in accordance with the recommendations of the recent Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, held in Apia. Secondly, we should work to ensure better representation for developing countries, particularly those in Africa, which today includes not only areas that are seeing significant economic growth but also some that are afflicted by great poverty and often bloody conflicts that slow their development and are an obstacle to their peoples' welfare.

Meanwhile, it is vital that the long-hoped-for reform of our Organization include ensuring that the Security Council takes on the role of coordinator in the fight against the new global scourge of terrorism. In any event, as a country committed to and involved in the East African Standby Force, the Union of the Comoros fully appreciates the Security Council's responsibilities in helping to promote, guide and supervise the prevention and resolution of conflicts in Central Africa, Nigeria and Mali, as well as Libya, Syria, Iraq, Ukraine and any country in crisis. All are sources of tension that undermine peace in various parts of the world and have become fertile breeding grounds for international terrorism. It is in that context, and especially in the wake of the recent and bloody armed attacks on our Palestinian brothers in Gaza, that I would like to stress the urgent need for a just and immediate solution to the question of Palestine, which, sadly, is almost as old as our Organization.

In order to maintain and build peace in a constantly changing world, we must focus unfailingly on conflict prevention, while continuing to support efforts to solve crises as they arise. Our community of nations has a duty to take the initiative on issues that may ruin our Organization's credibility if not dealt with fairly. That is the case with my country, which, admitted as a Member of the United Nations under resolution 3385 (XXX), of 12 November 1975, in affirmation of the importance of respecting the unity and territorial integrity of the Comoro Archipelago, consisting of four islands, still awaits the completion of its decolonization process. In that regard, in my address to the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session (see A/68/PV.10), I discussed our new approach to reaching an agreement with France on a fair solution that is consistent with the principles governing our Organization.

In keeping with the commitment I expressed from this rostrum, I would like to inform the Assembly that the high joint council proposed by the Paris Declaration has been established. This monitoring body began its work in November 2013 and is preparing to meet again at the end of this year. At its second meeting, the issues it will address will include that of people's movement between the archipelago's four islands, in an effort to end the tragedies that afflict Comorian families daily — tragedies that generally go unnoticed by international public opinion but are deeply damaging to my people's collective consciousness. These are tragedies that are equally troublesome to the conscience of France, the great country whose humanistic values we share.

In other words, quite apart from the two countries' territorial dispute, it is extremely urgent that we end this human tragedy through a peaceful and committed dialogue between the two parties, which can only benefit from United Nations support. That is why, in the spirit of the Paris Declaration and to pave the way for building a renewed relationship focused on the future, I recently sought the support of the Indian Ocean Commission at the fourth summit for Heads of State and Government of that subregional organization, of which France and the Comoros are both members.

There, the Comorian Government put the emphasis on a spirit of harmony aimed at preserving the bonds between our peoples, while reaffirming the importance of respecting the principles of international law in settling this 40-year dispute.

The purpose of the Assembly's sixty-ninth session is to define a development programme for the post-2015 period, with, as its chief aims, the eradication of poverty and hunger and the promotion of inclusive and sustainable economic growth throughout the world. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) unquestionably created a global covenant of solidarity for our nation's socioeconomic progress. Like many countries, and like small island developing States in particular, the Union of the Comoros has made significant strides towards achieving the Goals, including improving maternal health and women's participation in political and economic life, reducing malaria and infant mortality, fighting HIV/AIDS and ensuring equality in children's education. However, there is still much to do, particularly in the areas of food security, access to universal health care and the deterioration of the environment. Similarly, energy, sustainable agriculture and access to drinking water for much of the population are still matters for concern.

That is why, at a time when my country is negotiating entry into the World Trade Organization, we urge that the MDGs that have still not been reached be incorporated into our new sustainable development goals. We also call for strengthened strategic partnerships for development, the establishment of an equitable regime for international trade, the promotion of domestic and foreign direct investment and, lastly, greater mobilization and commitment in combating climate change. It is also vital to implement promptly the recommendations of the various climate summits, especially the Samoa Conference and the Climate Summit held here in New York on 23 September.

Many indicators over the past few years, such as the rate of economic growth in various African countries, give reason to hope for a better future for development on our continent. However, Africa is having to deal with challenges related to conflict resolution and multiple threats to peace and security that no country in the world can manage alone, without international cooperation and support. One example is Ebola, a virus that is devastating various West African countries, the alarming scale and speed of whose spread represent a global threat. We welcome the steps that many countries have taken recently to help contain and eradicate this epidemic.

It is on my belief in the crucial importance of international solidarity in meeting our peoples' ever-growing needs that I base my hopes of seeing our Organization successfully negotiate its own transformation after almost 70 years of existence. Indeed, it is by rising to meet the many current challenges and fully assuming the demands of an increasingly interdependent and complex world that we will be able together to open up ways of hope for future generations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Union of the Comoros for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ikililou Dhoinine, President of the Union of the Comoros, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Christopher Loeak, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Mr. Christopher Loeak, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Christopher Loeak, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Loeak: When the United Nations was founded nearly 70 years ago, it was created to fulfil the aspiration that peace and diplomacy could overcome self-interest and to ensure that, through effective cooperation, the world could avoid grave security threats. But the decades since the signing of the Charter of the United Nations have been marked by nearly as many failures as successes, and many of those failures could have been prevented by early action and stronger political will.

I am particularly concerned today about the recent events in Ukraine and the rapid spread of violent terrorism in Syria and Iraq, even though the Pacific Islands sit halfway around the world, a fragile region

far away from the global super-Powers. The leaders of nations have in our hands the means either to respond with alert action or to turn our backs on a growing danger.

Climate change poses no less of a security threat to our Pacific shores, and, indeed, to the world. As a low-lying country, the Marshall Islands has no higher ground — nowhere to go — and we will not cede an inch to rising waters. Earlier this week, over 120 world leaders met in this Hall to signal our political will and our commitment. No one should take that lightly. Leaders simply cannot afford to play consensus games or to squabble.

Yet words and intentions alone do not meet the full challenge before us. There will be serious emissions gaps between what the world will do and what needs to be done to save my nation. Earlier this week, young poet and mother Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner from the Marshall Islands stepped onto this very same stage to urge world leaders to take action. Today, on behalf of the most vulnerable nations — those at the front line — I ask of the leaders of the largest nations, the major emitters, in Kathy's very same words, to

> "take us all along on your ride. We will not slow you down. We will help you win the most important race of all, the race to save humanity".

Like no other global challenge, climate change requires direct political ownership and eye-to-eye engagement with leaders. This issue, more than any other, will define the Secretary-General's legacy as leader of these united nations. I urge him not only to continue to show his commendable personal leadership, but also to use his good offices to help find creative political solutions.

Everyone — large and small, rich and poor — must and will take strong action on emissions. In that regard, the Republic of the Marshall Islands strongly supports the Federated States of Micronesia, the United States of America, and many other nations in urging a rapid global phase-down of hydrofluorocarbon gases under the Montreal Protocol. I will personally attend the Paris climate conference next December, so that my voice and that of my people can be heard.

Unlike many other fights, the huge global fight to address climate change is also a personal one for me. It starts in my own backyard, with my own seawall, built with my own hands, to push back rising waters, save my own future and the future of my children and grandchildren. But that is not enough. We face a challenge that is nearly beyond belief. As with so many other moments in the history of the United Nations, we have to ask whether leaders will respond to the climate threat with courage. Or will some nations, including some close friends of the Pacific Islands, slide back in their efforts, bury their heads in the sand and ignore an obvious climate reality? I hope and expect that at the coming Group of Twenty meeting later this year, the world's largest economies will address climate change and the economic consequences of inaction. The Pacific island countries demand no less.

Mr. Imnadze (Georgia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Last month, nations around the world gathered in Apia for the third international conference on small island developing States. As hosts of the conference, the Government and people of Samoa showed the world true Pacific hospitality. As we have for decades, Pacific leaders have spoken firmly — in last year's Majuro Declaration for Climate Leadership, in this year's Palau Declaration on "The Ocean: Life and Future", and again in the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA Pathway).

Our development needs are beyond urgent and must not to be put off for yet another year. While the SAMOA Pathway charts a course forward for international partnership with small islands, there is too often a mismatch between our national structures and complicated sources of assistance. It is my hope and expectation that the major announcements and partnerships from the Samoa Summit will not lose momentum because of poor connections in the delivery channels. Our needs are often modest, but the trickle-down of international assistance and global development somehow fails to reach our local communities and to meet our unique challenges.

In the follow-up to the Samoa meeting, starting this year I urge the Secretary-General, the international system and United Nations agencies to start thinking seriously about how to work more effectively with our unique challenges as island nations. As Member States design a post-2015 development agenda, it is important that we focus on a strong outcome that has the flexibility to accommodate the unique character of each nation. We cannot measure progress without specific benchmarks, but as a small nation we fear that

having so many ambitions can be equivalent to having none at all. The answer is not to be isolated within a separate, unconnected island strategy, but rather to build the flexibility needed for so many nations to act as one.

I stand firm with my fellow Pacific leaders and nations around the world who have urged that there be a United Nations sustainable development goal on oceans. I am puzzled as to why some nations close their eyes to two thirds of the world's surface, pretending that the world's vast blue waters somehow do not exist. The Pacific Ocean and its rich fisheries are our lifeline. We are the custodians of our own vast resources on behalf of future generations.

We could introduce a step change in the world's sustainable fisheries and play our own role to address global food security. Distant-water fishing nations must engage us as true development partners and work with us to change the focus beyond their immediate national industry and towards a global responsibility. Recent progress on sustainable fisheries has become the defining story of the Pacific — it is our empowerment and our future. The oceans are an equally valuable resource for alternate sustainable energy, including ocean thermal energy conversion.

Everyone should participate on the international stage. The Republic of the Marshall Islands supports Taiwan's meaningful participation in United Nations specialized agencies and mechanisms, including the World Health Organization, the International Civil Aviation Organization and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as well as in key regional economic integration mechanisms. Furthermore, I call for Taiwan's involvement in the post-2015 development agenda and urge recognition of the important assistance provided to my country in health, education and energy. The Marshall Islands welcomes Taiwan's efforts to reduce cross-Strait tensions and urges States Members of the United Nations to recognize and encourage such progress.

As a former United Nations Trust Territory, the Republic of the Marshall Islands has a unique legacy, shared by only a very few in this Hall. It was the United Nations that helped set us on a path to independence, but it was also the United Nations that explicitly authorized the 67 nuclear tests conducted in our nation between 1946 and 1958. Our own history bears the burden and the contemporary impacts of those tests. Our suffering could have been prevented by the United Nations — if only its Members had listened. Like many other nations, the Republic of the Marshall Islands believes that awareness of the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons must underpin all approaches and efforts towards nuclear disarmament.

Those facts speak for themselves and were recognized two years ago by the United Nations Special Rapporteur. We look forward to addressing those issues further during our participation in the Human Rights Council universal periodic review next year. For the survival of humanity it is essential that nuclear weapons are never used again, under any circumstances. The universal way to accomplish that is through the total elimination of such weapons. It should be our collective goal as the United Nations to not only stop the spread of nuclear weapons, but also to pursue the peace and security of a world without them.

This year, I look forward to a United Nations that better recognizes the true global challenges of today and moves beyond old political cobwebs into our dynamic century.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Christopher Loeak, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Anote Tong, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati.

Mr. Anote Tong, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Anote Tong, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Tong: I bring everyone warm greetings from the people of Kiribati, on whose behalf I am once again privileged to address this body. In my country we begin all formal addresses by conferring blessings of peace and good health on all present, so let me say *Kam na bane ni Mauri*.

I echo the sentiments conveyed by previous speakers in congratulating the President on assuming the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. I am confident that under his able stewardship, our Organization will continue its work towards improving the security and quality of life for all members of our global community, in particular the most vulnerable. Let me also take this opportunity to acknowledge with appreciation the commendable leadership of his predecessor, Mr. John Ashe, for his guidance and stewardship over the past year.

I also wish to commend the unwavering commitment and hard work of our Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, who has served as an able navigator of our family's ship, steering the United Nations through the diverse and complex realities and the myriad of challenges facing our peoples and nations around the world. In particular, I wish to commend his sterling leadership and demonstrated personal commitment to the need to focus global attention on those who are most vulnerable and who are on the front line of the many major challenges facing us today as a global community.

We meet at a very critical time in the history of multilateralism. The global community is in the process of shaping a post-2015 development framework. We are hearing stronger calls for United Nations reforms, for reassessing the way we do things in our family of nations. The membership is calling for a move away from business as usual and for transformational changes. We welcome the theme of the sixty-ninth session — "Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda" — as it aptly captures the call for changes by the membership.

Earlier this week, on Tuesday, we concluded one of the most successful conferences ever convened by the Secretary-General on climate change. We applaud the leadership and the Secretary-General's very positive initiative. Those of us on the front line of the impacts of climate change welcome the renewed focus and the rallying by the United Nations membership behind the Secretary-General's call for ambitious announcements and commitments. The real challenge, however, is in being able to translate those commitments and announcements into action.

Three weeks ago, Samoa hosted the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States. The United Nations and those who attended declared it a resounding success. We thank our gracious hosts — the Government and the people of Samoa. Those very successful conferences signify recognition by the United Nations and the membership of the need to highlight the special case of those on the front line of sustainable development, to refocus global attention to the prevailing socioeconomic and environmental challenges that continue to constrain efforts by small island developing States (SIDS) to achieve sustainable development. That is particularly pertinent now, as the international community is in the process of shaping the post-2015 development agenda.

The Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action provides a clear blueprint of how the SIDS want to move forward in their efforts to achieve sustainable development. The real test of the success of the Samoa Conference, however, is in the adoption of outcomes into genuine and durable partnerships that can translate into activities on the ground that will deliver tangible benefits to our people.

While SIDS heard the plight of some of the most vulnerable, other United Nations processes are talking about the graduation of those countries from the least developed countries category. We believe that there is a contradiction here. If we as a family of nations do not act and do not work in partnership with those on the front line of major challenges, whatever they may be, then we will have failed in our efforts. I would like to reiterate our deepest appreciation to the Secretary-General for his demonstrated commitment and leadership in focusing the United Nations and global attention on the plight of the most needy, in alleviating poverty, addressing the Ebola epidemic, raising the voices of youth and women and their participation in development, ending gender-based violence, promoting peace and security, and acting against climate change now.

As I have highlighted on numerous occasions in the past, including earlier this week, the issue of climate change remains the most single pressing challenge for us in Kiribati. Climate change is an existential challenge for low-lying island countries like mine, Tuvalu, the Marshall Islands, the Maldives and

Tokelau, and I again call for urgent global action to help those countries adapt and for international legally binding commitments to cut greenhouse emissions. The global community cannot afford to not listen to our stories and to the plight of our peoples. Our plight is the plight of the global community, further down the line. Everyone's future is on the line.

I have just returned from an Arctic expedition, to the North Pole — hence, my loss of voice. I am still overwhelmed today by what I witnessed with my own eyes. The melting of the massive sheets of ice in the Arctic region due to climate change will not only have severe impacts on the lives of people in that region but will also result in the demise of future generations in other parts of the globe, in particular our most vulnerable atoll island nations. It has been an eye-opener for me to spend time in the past week in polar conditions. It gave me a wider perspective of the immensity of what is at stake beyond our own immediate concerns. That visit to the Arctic region highlighted the stark reality of the very direct connection between the destruction of that polar region to what is happening to us in the equatorial region, and the very unlikely possibility of ever reversing that process once it has gone so far.

On Tuesday we heard the voice of a very talented young woman, Ms. Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner, a poet from our part of the world, from the Marshall Islands. Her voice represents the apprehension, the concern and the voice of mothers from low-lying countries like ours who lament what the future holds for their children and their children's children. Surely, we as leaders and the mothers like Kathy and millions of others around the world share, or should share, the same ultimate goal — to leave to our children and grandchildren a future that is better than what we inherited from our forefathers. We from Kiribati salute Kathy for reaching out and for touching the hearts of leaders who heard her speak. May she touch many hearts and move many more hearts.

The very sad reality is that we are just not on course to achieve that. It is glaringly obvious that we need to do things differently. We owe it to those whom we represent — our people. For us, climate change is not an event in the future. It is an event that we are dealing with today. We simply cannot talk of sustainable development without talking about climate change. Earlier this week, I appealed to fellow leaders, and will do so again today, for all of us to work together against climate change and to move towards binding international agreements, towards a clean energy future, a healthier greener future for our children and a healthier, greener home for our one planet, Earth.

What are we doing? Let us accept full responsibility for our own development to improve the well-being of our people into the future. We are determined to achieve that by finding national solutions to overcome the enormous development challenges that constrain our efforts. My Government has mainstreamed sustainable development principles into our national development plan, policies and strategies. Climate change and adaptation measures are integrated into our national budgeting process and development programmes to strengthen disaster risk management. We have adopted an inclusive, whole-of-government and whole-of-nation approach aimed at addressing climate change impacts and strengthening our resilience.

Our strategy for migration with dignity is an investment in the education of our people and upping the skills of our young population to equip them with the educational qualifications and employable skills that will enable them to migrate with dignity to other countries as a matter of choice and, in the worst-case scenario, when our islands can no longer sustain human life.

Last July, along with other frontline low-lying atoll island States — Tuvalu, the Marshall Islands, Maldives and Tokelau — Kiribati initiated the establishment of the Coalition of Low-lying Atoll Nations on Climate Change (CANCC). The Coalition held its inaugural meeting in Tarawa in July and produced an outcome document that embraces the Coalition's goals and vision for building the resilience of our people in the face of the challenges of climate change. The initiative is prompted by the concerns we share regarding the increasing severity of those challenges and the slow pace of global action to address them. Our Coalition of nations continues to support the ongoing negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, but we also emphasize that urgent action must be taken now to assist our countries and all vulnerable communities to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

The Coalition initiative demonstrates our political commitment and determination to find innovative solutions to the threats we face from climate change. We are looking at building up our low islands and climate-proofing our infrastructure, and at our

development efforts to prepare and build the resilience of our people in the face of the challenge.

We cannot do this alone, and we acknowledge the support of our development partners and regional and international organizations that have assisted us and continue to support our efforts to address the challenge of climate change. However, much more remains to be done, including making climate-financing facilities more accessible and flexible, as the solutions and options for facing this challenge vary from nation to nation.

The ocean plays a pivotal role in the sustainable development of my country. Our vision for achieving sustainable development hinges on the blue economy — on the conservation and sustainable management of our marine and ocean resources. While we in Kiribati have been labelled a small island developing State, we are in fact a "large ocean" State that spans an ocean area of 3.5 million square kilometres. The ocean has been an integral part of our life since time immemorial. While it now poses a serious threat to our survival from sea-level rise, it also provides immense opportunities, not only as a source of daily sustenance, but also as a means through which we can realize sustainable development and achieve livelihoods for our people.

Our exclusive economic zone (EEZ) is one of the largest in the world and is home to abundant tuna resources that provide rich fishing grounds for our distant fishing partners. We estimate that the total annual landed value of the fisheries industry in our EEZ is approximately $4 billion. Yet only 5 to 8 per cent of that comes to us as resource owners, through licensing fees. We have to ask, where is the equity and fairness in that?

There is a need to review and restructure the nature of public and private partnerships in the fishing industry. A more equitable partnership based on mutual respect, goodwill, fairness and accountability will go a long way in providing an enabling environment for sustainable development.

My Government is working to maximize the returns from our large fisheries resource through value-adding fisheries development, including on-shore processing. Our limited capacity in terms of capital, technical know-how, a lack of infrastructure, distance from commercial and trade centres and air and sea transport challenges stands in the way of our progress towards that development aspiration. Direct foreign investment and genuine partnership are therefore a way forward in that regard. I am confident that such partnership, forged around an equitable distribution of gains, will be the development model going forward, with mutual gains to be made.

Human activities have been responsible for the accelerated degradation of our global environment, in the pursuit of short-term economic gains without due regard to the health of our oceans and our environment. Never in human history has the health of our oceans and planet Earth been so challenged. We all have a shared responsibility and obligation with regard to the protection of the ocean from further degradation and the sustainable management of its rich biodiversity.

My country recognizes that shared responsibility and, in 2008, established the Phoenix Islands Protected Area (PIPA) in partnership with Conservation International and the New England Aquarium. UNESCO has inscribed PIPA on its list of World Heritage Sites. In January 2015, we will completely close off the Phoenix Islands Protected Area to all commercial fishing activity across an area of more than 410,000 square kilometres, representing 11 per cent of our total EEZ — about the size of the state of California.

PIPA is a rich fishing ground, so its total closure on 31 December this year will entail loss of much-needed revenue for Kiribati from fishing licence fees. For us, it is a major but necessary short-term sacrifice for the long-term health of our ocean and for sustaining fish stocks for global food security. It demonstrates our political commitment to the importance of marine conservation and the sustainable management of marine resources. It is our contribution to humankind and the common good of all.

But the announcement of complete closure of this vast marine protected area will amount to nothing without monitoring and enforcement. We have therefore established a PIPA trust fund to support our national efforts in managing PIPA and monitoring that vast marine protected area. We thank those who share our vision and have contributed to the fund. We encourage our partners who have not yet done so to join with us in that massive undertaking.

The challenges we face in the twenty-first century have taken on a new dimension. It is no longer a fight to save a species here and a collapsed stock there; the fight has become larger. It is now about how to

ensure the survival of whole peoples — communities, villages, cities and nations. Entire ecosystems hang in the balance, the ecosystems that provide us with the air we breathe, the water we drink and much of the food we eat. It is time to view our global development in a whole new way. It is time to change business as usual. Indeed, a paradigm shift and transformational development approaches are necessary, starting from within our own nations and moving out to regional and international multilateral processes, institutions and partnerships.

It is high time we recognize that the new challenges require that we draw on all the resources available to the global community. Development and global challenges do not belong to Governments alone. Let us bring in our youth, our women, civil society, the private sector and our traditional institutions. Let us be inclusive. Let all those who have a contribution to make make it.

We welcome the inclusion of Taiwan in the international processes of the World Health Assembly. We hope that a similar inclusive approach will prevail in respect of our other international institutions and the United Nations processes, where Taiwan and all those that can participate and contribute meaningfully for the good of humankind can be brought in to do so.

We join in the broad international condemnation of criminal extremism and express the hope that such destabilizing tensions in Europe, the Asia-Pacific region and elsewhere can be settled through peaceful means. As distant as we think we are from the epicentres of such events, they nonetheless impact on us in a very real way in our part of the world.

In my country, even before the advent of climate change, the atoll environment was indeed harsh. Life on the low-lying atoll islands has always been difficult. We have always worked on the principle of working together as part of a community on the premise that there will be some challenges that are larger than us and need collaboration. The age-old test of our resilience and our strength as a community is defined by the well-being of the weakest member of our community. For us, sustainable development must be inclusive. It requires sincerity, goodwill, respect and the willingness to move a little more slowly so as to assist and bring everyone on board in order to move forward together.

I would like to bring those principles to the United Nations. The pursuit of sustainable development and lasting peace and security calls for and requires sacrifice. It requires inclusiveness. It requires collective and decisive action. It also requires political commitment and political leadership from all of us here, for the time to act is now.

On that note, I leave members with the traditional blessing: may health, peace and prosperity be with us all.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Anote Tong, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.